

3.6 Land Use, Planning, Population, and Housing

This section describes impacts of the Project relative to land use planning policies, particularly inconsistencies of the Project with adopted County policies intended to reduce environmental impacts of development projects. This section also presents analysis of the impacts of the Project related to population and housing in Placer County and the region.

Environmental Setting

The Project is proposed on vacant land, and as such would not necessitate the replacement of housing, nor does the Project involve the relocation of people. The Project is surrounded by a private park, residential development, a PG&E facility, and commercial land uses along State Highway 49 (S.R. 49). Project vehicular access would be via existing roadways, as proposed. As such, the Project cannot be construed as dividing an established community.

The Project site is located in the North Auburn area of unincorporated Placer County, within the *Auburn/Bowman Community Plan* area. This area has rapidly developed during the relatively recent past, with former rural residential and agricultural properties being converted to urban residential, commercial, and civic land uses.

Urban development of the S.R. 49 corridor, especially between Dry Creek Road on the north and New Airport Road on the south, Dewitt Center to the west, and the Auburn Airport to the east, consists of office, retail, and commercial services, complemented by a hospital, airport, industrial centers, a County government complex, schools, parks, and a large number of multi- and single-family dwellings.

Placer County has been one of the fastest growing (if not the fastest growing) county in California in recent years in terms of population growth. Between 1990 and 2000, the County's unincorporated population increased by 20 percent, while California's population increased by just 14 percent.¹ Currently, Placer County has an incorporated population of approximately 190,000 and a total population of approximately 292,000.²

Regulatory Setting

The *Placer County General Plan*, in conjunction with specific community plans, establishes future land uses and other management policies relevant for land use change in areas under the County's jurisdiction (including the Project site). Many of the policies contained in these policy documents were adopted with the intent to reduce the environmental impacts of urban development compared to what would occur without the application of such policies. In addition, both plans

designate land within their respective planning areas for certain uses, designations that were adopted to serve broad purposes such as:

- Accommodating regional population growth in a planned and coordinated manner;
- Promoting compatibility of adjacent urban development;
- Allowing long-range planning and financing of infrastructure and service provision; and,
- Providing for economic development.

Relevant policies and goals of the *Auburn Bowman Community Plan* and the *Placer County General Plan* are presented and evaluated relative to the Project in more detail in the material that follows.

Land surrounding the Project site to the north, south, and east is designated Low Density Residential, 3.1 to five units per acre. Property west of the Project site is designated for commercial, industrial, rural residential, and medium-density residential development. Refer to **Figure 2-4** for Community Plan Land Use Designations and **Figure 2-5** for Zoning Districts in areas surrounding the Project site. A private park, maintained by an adjacent homeowners association, is located to the east of the Project, across Canal Street. Single-family homes exist to the north, and a PG&E utility yard is located to the south. SR 49 commercial and industrial land uses are located to the west.

The vast majority of the Project site is designated Commercial in the *Auburn Bowman Community Plan*, with the exception of a small triangle of land in the southeast corner of the Project site that is designated Industrial. The majority of the Project site is zoned CPD-Dc-AO, Commercial Planned Development, with Design Corridor and Aircraft Overflight combining districts, with the aforementioned triangle in the southeast corner zoned INP-Dc, Industrial Park with a Design Corridor combined district.

The Project site is located within the North Auburn Redevelopment Area, as defined in the Affordable Housing Element of the *Placer County General Plan*. The Affordable Housing Element of the General Plan requires that at least 15 percent (15%) of all new dwelling units in residential projects constructed in the North Auburn project area of the Placer County redevelopment area shall be “affordable” and shall not be constructed later than the market-rate dwelling units, unless specific requirements are met.

The Project will include 18 affordable homes, which will be constructed on site on the Inclusionary Housing lots with a minimum lot area of 3,010 square feet, per Placer County Code, Chapter 15 Building and Development, Article 15.65 Affordable Housing. Lots 100 through 114 are designated for affordable housing. These homes will be sold to buyers who qualify for affordable housing.

Commercial Planned Development Zoning District Designation ³

According to the Placer County Code, “the purpose of the commercial planned development (CPD) zone district is to designate areas appropriate for mixed-use community shopping centers, office parks, and other similar developments, where excellence in site planning and building design are important objectives.” Commercial developments of many types are allowed by right or through the County’s conditional use permit process within this zoning district. Certain residential uses are also allowed either by right or through the conditional permitting process:

- Caretaker and employee housing (zoning clearance required)
- Home occupations (zoning clearance required)
- Multifamily dwellings, any size (conditional use permit required) ⁴
- Residential accessory uses (conditional use permit required)
- Senior housing projects (conditional use permit required)

Rezoning would be required prior to approval of the Project, which proposes land uses not allowed in the CPD zone. The Project applicant is requesting a rezone to RS-B-3, single-family residential with a minimum lot size of 3,000 square feet. As part of the entitlement process the decision-making bodies will need to make the finding that re-zoning land from commercial to residential is justifiable and will not result in a negative fiscal impact to the community. Development standards for this requested zoning district are summarized in **Table 3.6-1**.

Table 3.6-1
Required Development Standards Applicable to Project

Site Coverage	Setbacks			Lot Width (feet)	Height Limit (feet)
	Front	Side	Rear		
40 percent maximum	20 feet minimum	15 feet total, 5 feet minimum - one story; 7 1/2 feet minimum - two or more stories	10 feet minimum - one story; 20 feet minimum - two or more stories	Fifty-five (55) feet	Thirty (30) feet

Source: Placer County Code, online, <http://ordlink.com/codes/placer/index.htm>.

Design Review Combining District Designation (-Dc)

Due to the proximity of the Project site to Highway 49 the “Design Scenic Corridor” combining zone district has been assigned to the Project site as well as surrounding properties. The Design Scenic Corridor applies to areas of special natural beauty or aesthetic interest and areas that are highly visible from major roadways in the Industrial, Commercial, and Multi-family Residential zone districts and requires that all projects complete a Design Review process. Because a re-zone from CPD-Dc-AO to RS-B-3 is being requested, if approved, the Project would not be required to complete the Design Review process. However the project will be reviewed for compatibility with the Design Element of the *Auburn Bowman Community Plan* and any other policies in the Community Plan that dictate or influence aesthetic features of the Project.

Auburn/Bowman Community Plan

The *Auburn/Bowman Community Plan* area includes approximately 40 square miles at the base of the Sierra Nevada foothills. The Community Plan includes a variety of residential and non-residential land uses throughout the Plan area. The Land Use Element of the Community Plan specifies the intensity and density of land uses permitted, as well as the commensurate needs for

supportive land uses such as schools, parks, the circulation system, and other public facilities. The land use designation for the Project site, and all land use designations in the Plan area, are based on General Community Goals and Planning Principles presented throughout the Community Development Element of the Community Plan.

The Community Plan is designed to further communitywide goals and principles for future development. The Community Plan has a chapter containing the goals that had the greatest impact on the preparation of the Plan and those that can be described as general community goals (as opposed to specific goals related to an element of the Community Plan). Goals and planning principles that are relevant in considering environmental impacts of the proposed Project are included below:⁵

GENERAL COMMUNITY GOALS

2. Locate urban and suburban development in areas where urban services, commercial facilities, and transportation facilities are readily available.
3. Encourage the construction of new housing to meet future needs anticipated in current population projections for all economic segments of the population.
4. Provide for residential development which creates functional, attractive, cohesive neighborhoods which are closely tied to adjoining neighborhoods.
5. Provide a sufficient mix of neighborhood, regional, and highway commercial facilities to serve the residents of the Auburn/Bowman region as well as those visiting the area.
22. Amendments to the Auburn/Bowman Community Plan should be minimal until such time as the County determines circumstances in the area have changed so significantly that an update of the plan is necessary. Piecemeal Community Plan amendments should be discouraged.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

Goal A2b Provide housing to meet future needs anticipated in current population projections for all economic segments of the population anticipated within the plan area while ensuring compatibility with existing land uses.

Policy B3a Encourage logical expansion of the area by developing infill areas and those lands lying closest to existing developed areas, before extending into outlying areas.

Policy B3cc Residential areas with densities greater than one unit per acre should be located where a full range of services and facilities can be provided most efficiently and economically.

Policy B3dd Where appropriate, higher density housing should be provided in sufficient quantity to meet Housing Element goals while retaining and preserving existing single family residential neighborhoods.

Policy C3a5 Commercial and residential site layouts should be designed with the intent to encourage human interaction, and to be compatible with the surrounding environment, versus designs which solely accommodate automobile usage; pedestrian walkways should be provided between commercial and residential areas.

Placer County Design Guidelines

The *Auburn/Bowman Community Plan* also contains Design Guidelines tailored specifically to commercial, industrial, and multi-family projects in the North Auburn area of the Community Plan. The Design Guidelines provide separate guidelines for the “Core” and “Transition” areas of the North Auburn area of the Community Plan (see **Figure 3.6-1**). The Project is located in the Core area. These Design Guidelines provide direction on a number of aspects of commercial, industrial, and multi-family projects including the following:

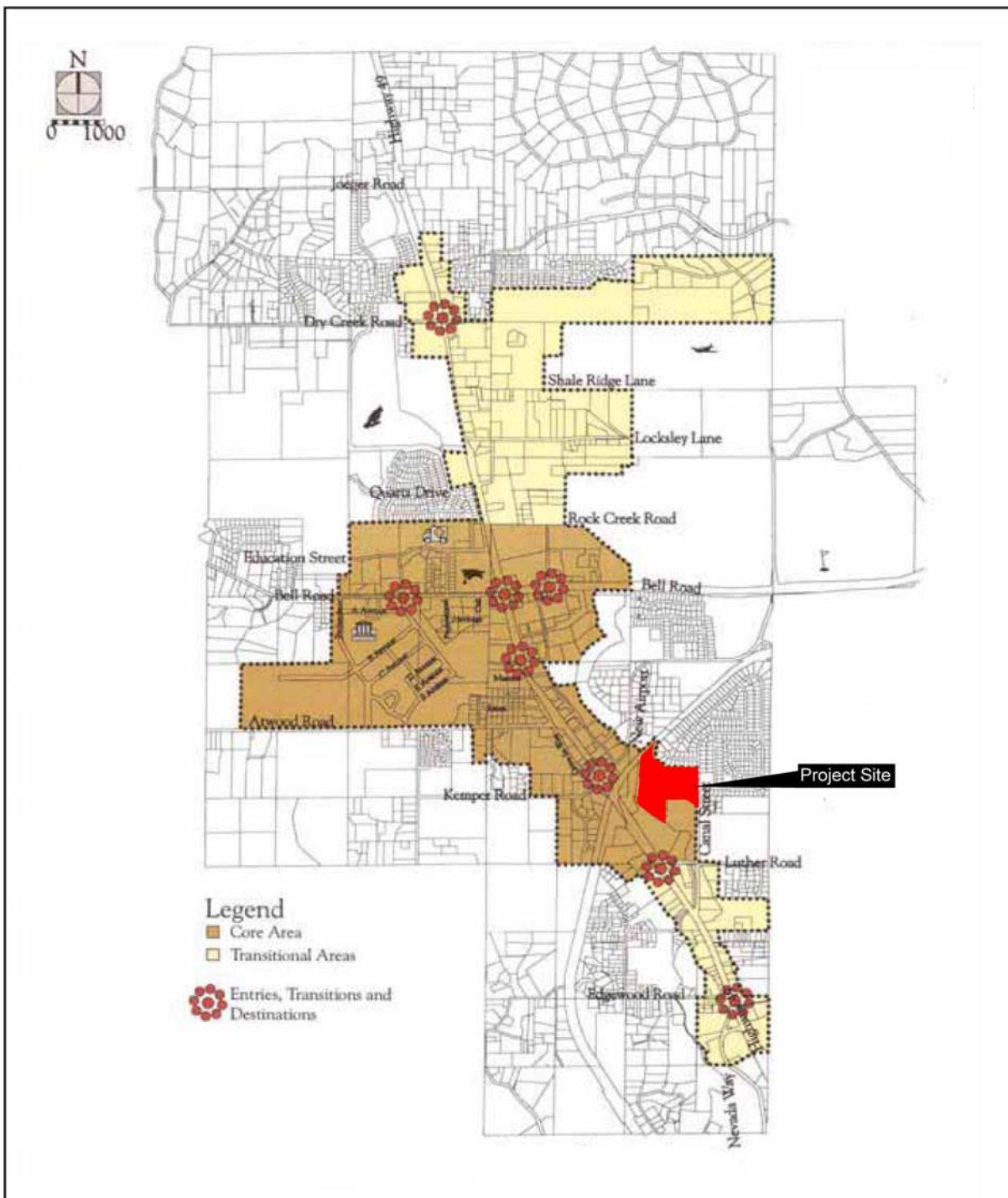
- General Architectural Elements: This section addresses building entries, building articulation, design consistency, materials and color, theme design, and mechanical equipment;
- Landscaping: This section addresses the overall landscape design concept, walls and fences, plant materials, and the connections to the surrounding street network;
- Energy Conservation: This section addresses the use of energy conserving windows, shade features such as awnings, and building siting to conserve energy; and,
- Fencing: This section stresses the use of the most appropriate fencing material based on the goal of the fence, i.e., screening versus preserving a view, etc.

These guidelines do not apply to the Project as it will not include commercial, industrial, or multi-family development (except under alternative plans – see Section 4.0). However, the Project design will be reviewed for compliance with goals and policies for residential and urban residential set forth in the Design Element of the Community Plan.

Methodology

Land use planning impacts are evaluated in this section by determining if the proposed Project is in compliance with goals, policies, and land use designations of the *Auburn/Bowman Community Plan*, County zoning requirements, and other relevant policy documents. The analysis focuses specifically on policies that, if violated, may contribute to some direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect environmental impact (as defined by the CEQA Statutes and Guidelines) compared to what would be anticipated with full policy compliance. The focus of the section is on policies that apply to housing projects and not on policies that apply to the County itself or policies that apply only to some other type of land use not included in the Project.

Not all of the County’s environmental policies can be quantitatively or definitively evaluated. Therefore, while this EIR analyzes the Project’s consistency with applicable policies, it is the County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors who will make the ultimate determination in this regard.



Source: Placer County Design Guidelines

Figure 3.6-1
Design Guideline Areas

This EIR also analyzes the compatibility of the Project with surrounding and nearby land uses and properties. Potential land use compatibility issues include those related to noise levels, unsafe traffic conditions, and adverse changes to the aesthetic environment, odors, and air quality degradation. Compatibility issues have been analyzed and are addressed more thoroughly within the topic specific sections of this EIR:

- Section 3.1, Aesthetics
- Section 3.2, Air Quality
- Section 3.3, Biological Resources
- Section 3.7, Noise
- Section 3.8, Public Services, Utilities, and Recreation
- Section 3.9, Safety
- Section 3.11, Transportation

Thresholds of Significance

Impacts would be considered significant if the Project would:

- Physically divide an established community;
- Conflict with *Auburn-Bowman Community Plan* or *Placer County General Plan* policies or other regulations of an agency with jurisdiction over the Project that were adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect;
- Create incompatibilities with existing land use in the Project vicinity;
- Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan;
- Induce substantial population growth, either directly or indirectly; or,
- Displace substantial numbers of existing housing or people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.

Environmental Impact and Mitigation Measures

Impact LAN-1 Consistency with Land Use Policy

Table 3.6-2 identifies County land use policies that have some relevance to the Project and some bearing on environmental issues in the vicinity. Policies that cannot be evaluated as of the writing of this EIR not included below. Policies in the Community Plan are organized under one or more purpose statements. If the purpose statement does not involve environmental issues, policies under that purpose statement are not evaluated.

Table 3.6-2
Consistency with Relevant Land Use Policies

Policy	Discussion
Auburn/Bowman Community Plan Community Development Element Policies	
a. Encourage logical expansion of the area by developing infill areas and those lands lying closest to existing developed areas before extending into outlying areas.	The Project site is surrounded by already developed land, including residential development, highway commercial along SR 49, an equipment yard owned by PG&E, and a small park.
cc. Residential areas with densities greater than one unit per acre should be located where a full range of services and facilities can be provided most efficiently and economically.	The Project proposes a residential density greater than one unit per acre. The Project is located in an area where the full range of services and facilities can be provided.
dd. Where appropriate, higher density housing should be provided in sufficient quantity to meet Housing Element goals while retaining and preserving existing single family residential neighborhoods.	The Project applicant is requesting a downzone to RS-B-3, single-family residential with 3,000 square-foot minimum lots. The Community Plan land use designation and County zoning district designation accommodate higher density land uses for this site, which is surrounded by existing development and where urban services can be efficiently provided, as required by this policy.
a5. Commercial and residential site layouts should be designed with the intent to encourage human interaction, and to be compatible with the surrounding environment, versus designs which solely accommodate automobile usage; pedestrian walkways should be provided between commercial and residential areas.	The Project Description does not provide information relative to building design or placement, porches, or other design elements that might promote interaction between residents of the Project site. The Project does propose a gate at the entrance to the Project site, which would discourage coincidental interaction with neighbors. Compatibility with the surrounding environment is considered in some way in almost all sections in this EIR. The extent to which the site layouts are designed to be compatible with the surrounding environment depends on the topic area considered. For example, from a land use perspective, proposing homes adjacent to a corporation yard and highway commercial area might not be a compatible land use; however, the Project site is also located adjacent to detached single-family residential development, which would certainly be considered a geographically compatible land use. Pedestrian walkways are not proposed to link the Project site with planned commercial areas along S.R. 49.

Inconsistencies of the Project relative to County adopted policies with a bearing on environmental issues mostly have to do with:

- The lack of tree preservation measures in the site plan;

- Downzoning of the site to accommodate single-family detached (as opposed to attached or some other multi-family dwelling type) housing; and,
- The proposed gate at the entrance of the Project to prevent public access.

This EIR includes mitigation measures and considers alternatives that address each of the inconsistencies with County policy summarized in the table above. The mitigation measures are provided in the topical sections of this EIR for which they are most appropriate. The inconsistencies that are not addressed by mitigation, but rather are included as a part of the alternatives analysis, do not in and of themselves create a significant environmental impact. The impact is considered **less than significant**.

Notes and References

- ¹ Placer County. *Housing Element*. 2003.
- ² California Department of Finance, 2004.
- ³ Placer County Code Section 17.20.010.
- ⁴ Multi-family housing is defined by the Placer County Zoning Code as “a building or a portion of a building used and/or designed as residences for two or more families living independently of each other. Includes: halfplex structures (a halfplex is a single dwelling unit that is half of a two-unit building where a property line separates the two units), duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes (detached buildings under one ownership with two, three, or four dwelling units (respectively) in the same building) and apartments (five or more units under one ownership in a single building); common ownership, attached unit projects such as condominiums and townhouses; and rooming and boarding houses (single dwellings where bedrooms are rented to five or more people and at least one common meal is offered each day). The boarding of four or fewer renters is not considered to be a land use different from a single-family dwelling.”
- ⁵ Placer County. *Design Guidelines*. 2002.